

200809 - Sun AM/MRCC

“ReMix” – a standalone message

(Luke 6:12-16; Matt 10:2-4; Jn 13:34-35; Rom 15:7; 14:7; 1 Cor 12:14-18; Eph 1:12; 4:1-6; et al)

PURPOSE: God calls believers to embrace each other in spite of our differences.

INTRO:

1. Q: What would you think if I invited you to eat a bowl of spiders?

HUMOR: When Rhonda was in Cambodia with the Missions Team last winter, she was invited to try a local delicacy – **deep-fried tarantulas ... [SLIDE/VIDEO]**

Q: Sound appetizing? She said they’re crunchy ... [can you imagine ... ?] 8-)

HUMOR: avg person eats 8 spiders/year while sleeping ... ? **Not!**

2. But cultural differences can be pretty dramatic (the culturetrip.com):

- a) In Nicaragua you point with your lips ...
- b) In Greece you spit at a new bride ...
- c) In Russia, Procreation Day happens on September 12th ...
- d) February 2nd is Groundhog Day in the U.S. ...
- e) In Denmark, it’s popular to hang out socially in cemeteries ...
- f) In Malaysia you point with the thumb ...
- g) In Japan, slurping noodles is considered polite appreciation ...

3. Our world is a wildly diverse place, and the Bible says that Heaven will be, too – **After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and unto the Lamb.” (Rev 7:9-10)** What a marvelous and beautiful picture ... !

But **sometimes we let our differences become reasons to reject each other, instead of celebrate each other***.**

- a) Israel struggled with this repeatedly (Numb 12, e.g.) ...
- b) the early church struggled with it (Acts 6, Acts 15, et al ...) ...
- c) we’re told that the Devil’s agenda is to bring division (2 Tim 2:25-26) ...
- d) and we still struggle with it today ... [COVID, etc.] but God’s desire is for us to accept one another despite our differences; to remain Jesus’ people even though we sometimes disagree with each other about some things ... let’s let God speak to us about this today – as He says in Romans, **“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.” (Rom 15:7)**

TRANSITION: Turn to **Luke 6:12-16 ...**

I. A BUNCH OF MISFITS

1. CONTEXT = Jesus' early ministry ... *One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called 'the Zealot', Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. (Luke 6:12-16)*

a) First of all, it's worth thinking about that Jesus' constant habit of prayer (Lk 5:16) got more intense when he had big decisions to make ... so should ours.

Clarity of mind comes from meeting with God in prayer – NOTE: Jesus prayed all night ... it wasn't just a Q&A, but a searching of the soul ...

ILLUS: James 1:5ff ... God gives wisdom to all who ask

b) Second, it's worth noticing that Jesus didn't choose everyone to be everything. There were lots of disciples who weren't chosen to be apostles ...

Q: How would you have felt if you wanted to be one of the 12 chosen, but you weren't? Would you fear that Jesus loved you less, or would you faith-fully believe that He simply had a different direction for you ... ?

Following Jesus means trusting Him ... "Trust in the Lord with all of your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all of your ways submit to him, and he will make your path straight." (Prov 3:5-6)

ILLUS: Rhonda and I went through ten long years of infertility, when we prayed to be blessed with pregnancy. But it led to our son Isaiah, and we wouldn't have it any other way ...

2. But third – let me invite you to consider how wildly diverse a group Jesus chose – this isn't the Top Ten Most Likely to Succeed, or even get along - and it isn't a group chosen for their natural like-mindedness ... let's review what we know:

a) in **v.15, there's Simon the Zealot** ... he's all patriotism and politics. The Zealots were known for their repeated rebellions against Rome. They believed that God's will was for the Romans to be driven out of Israel so Israel could get back to religious law again. One group among the Zealots – known as the *sicarii* – was even specifically devoted to attacking any Jews who cooperated with Rome in any way ...

But Jesus chose a Zealot to be one of His closest circle.

b) there's **James & John (v.14)** who would later earn the name, "Sons of Thunder" (Mark 3, cf Lk 9) for their temper. They were blue-collar guys (fishermen) who were too busy trying to provide for their families to get caught up in being zealots - but it wasn't only their tempers that would have been a challenge to the unity of the group:

Mark tells us in chap.10 that they went behind the backs of the other disciples and asked for special places of honor above the rest ... and when the team heard about it they were “indignant” (Mk 10:41).

Q: Do you think these incidents might have made it hard for them to remain a family ... ?

c) then there's **Philip (v.14)** who was a practical guy – he's the one mentioned in John 6 going back-and-forth with Jesus over the feeding of the 5,000 ... it's easy to infer that he was the guy handling admin for the crowds ...

He also had a knack for bringing other people to meet Jesus, like he did with Nathanael (John 1:45) and with some seeking Gentiles (John 12:22). We might think of him as a glue guy, always building groups.

Q: How do you think he felt when he heard that James & John wanted to blow up a Samaritan village, or Simon wanted to lead a rebellion?

d) **then there's Matthew (v.15)** who was a former criminal - and a traitor to Israel ... !

Q: Can you imagine how Simon the Zealot might have felt when Jesus not only invited him to be a disciple (Matt 9), but made him one of the leaders!

e) **then there's Judas Iscariot (v.16)**, who was an embezzler (Jn 12:6) and he knew how to lie well. He was like that guy at work who's never really authentic. He'll say what he thinks people want to hear, but you know he isn't real.

Q: How do you think he fit into this volatile mix? And - **why did Jesus pick him?**

[NOTE – some people will say He was just painting by the numbers, robotically following some clockwork prophetic agenda – but **Jesus tells us God is looking for more than obedience from us**; He's looking for love/friendship (Jn 15:15) ... **ILLUS:** How would you feel if your best friend said, “Just tell me what you want me to do and I'll do it ... “]

f) And we could go on and on about **Simon Peter (v.14)**, who was always jumping the gun or missing the point or going back on his promises, who argued with Jesus when the Lord wanted to wash his feet, and who was so completely out of touch with Jesus' mission that the Lord once called him the Devil (Matt 16:33). When you read the gospels, Peter never seems to know when to stop talking ...

... and then **there's Bartholomew**, who never seemed to say anything (Sleepy?), **and Thomas** who was always expecting the worst (Jn 11:16) and refusing to believe the best (Jn 20:25), and ... well, you get the idea.

3. Can you imagine how easily this group could have blown apart? But Jesus didn't pick them for who they were, He picked them for who they could be*** – for who they would be after He patiently walked with them and taught them to love one another.

Q: Are you willing to walk with your fellow believers the same way ... ?***

4. **ILLUS:** I will always remember the motley collection of yahoos that became Platoon 1069 at MCRD San Diego in 1982. We could not have been a bigger bunch of low-potential knuckleheads.

But 13 weeks later we marched and snapped together in perfect precision in a way that I am still amazed by and proud of all these years later. **Q: Why? How? A: We stayed together and we learned together ...**

TRANSITION:

Dear friends, we are living in a dangerous time ...

II. DIFFERENT ON PURPOSE

1. ... it's dangerous because **the tendency of the sinful nature is to divide over little things instead of unite over big ones.***** Everybody's angry about something, mad at someone, and looking for allies. There are so many voices in our world today seeking to divide people ... **but Jesus united a group of people with differences over a bigger mission, and that's HOW they became the Apostles ...**

ILLUS: MacArthur/Stanley in LA/Atlanta ... is one completely wrong and one completely right? Were one or two of the disciples completely right and the others completely wrong?

You see, friends, God calls us to see the bigger unity and give each other room to feel differently while remaining one family ...

2. You see, we aren't meant to be exactly the same, or to agree on everything, but **we are different on purpose ... *Now the body is not made up of one part, but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. (1 Cor 12:14-18)***

IOW, we're different so we can contribute our differences ...

ILLUS/HUMOR: Rhonda and I are very different when it comes to housework. She wants everything clean, and I want it orderly. I don't care if it's clean as long as it's neat, and she cares more about it being neat than clean. It could make us crazy – instead, it makes us one ... (mostly). 8-)

In the same way, **ILLUS:** I have bad ideas about kids ministry, but Pastor Allison has good ones. I'm not great at fellowship because I'm too introverted, but Pastor Dave is AWESOME at it. I love worship, but Pastor Weston is massively better at it than me, so he tells me where we're going. I do know the Bible pretty good, so I teach, **and together we are more than the sum of our parts ...**

3. MOST important of all is not the leadership of the leaders, but the followership of most of you, who are willing to cooperate*** ...

Knowing this, God says, ***"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." (Rom 15:7)***

ILLUS: I remember one time when our son Isaiah was little and he went to spend the night with his friend in another family. That weekend after church, the Mom came up to Rhonda and me and said, “Hey, I just want to tell you how great your son was ... “

- and we became frightened and wondered if it was the wrong kid ... 8-)

But seriously, we felt so amazing that he had been so respectful and obedient because it reflected well on us. That’s what we can do for God – give Him the reputation He deserves.

The Bible says that you and me are chosen, **“for the praise of his glory,” (Eph 1:12)**, where ‘glory’ is the Gk *doxa* meaning [mostly] “reputation” ...

4. So Jesus tells us, right before He goes back to Heaven to prepare a place for each one of us – **“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this will all men know that you are my disciples.” (John 13:34-35)**

Dear friends, **you will find the peace in your heart that is strong enough to carry you through these times of strife and division when you surrender completely to your place in the Body of Christ – to your place among your local fellowship of growing believers ...**

ILLUS: There was a moment when the crowds abandoned Jesus (John 6) ... He turned to these twelve and asked, **“You don’t want to leave to, do you?” (John 6:67)** That’s when Peter said, **“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.” (John 6:68-69)**

When we surrender* to our identity as the people of God, we find the peace and the power to overcome the other stuff ...**

5. So ... Q: Will you surrender to your identity as followers of Jesus? Will you accept the other people He chooses to put beside you ... ?

a) Q: Will you make space [and time] for someone else to learn, or will you demand that everyone agree with you on everything ... ?

We are chosen, **“for the praise of his glory,” (Eph 1:12)**

b) **ILLUS:** Some time ago, I was seeing a doctor and he knew that I am a pastor so, after we were done with my appointment, he closed the door and said, “Can I ask you a personal question?”

“Sure.” ... And he said, “How come you Christians can be so angry and bitter on social media? The worst fights I’ve ever seen are between people who tell me they follow Jesus. Can you explain that?”

All I could say was, “I’m sorry – we’re not supposed to be that way.”

To his fellow Jews, Paul wrote, **“God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.” (Rom 2:24, q.Isa 52:5)** None of us want that – so HOW do we overcome?

TRANSITION:

But Jesus can lift us above that, and He does as we just keep putting one foot in front of the other as part of His Body ...

So – HOW do we do that?

III. CALLED UP

1. **BELIEVE IN OUR DIFFERENCES ...** *Now the body is not made up of one part, but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body", it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. (1 Cor 12:14-18)* **ILLUS/HUMOR:** The Seahawks will never win with a bunch of running backs ... they need a punter and a kicker. 😊

2. **MAKE TIME AND SPACE FOR OTHERS TO GROW ...** *"Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters." (Rom 14:7)*

No one grows old and wise without first being young and foolish. We give our kids time to grow up, but do we give each other the same time and space?

ILLUS: I cringe when I think of what it must have been like to have a 26-y/o me for a Senior Pastor. But a bunch of saints did, and I will always be thankful to them ...

3. **REMEMBER THAT OUR LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER MATTERS MOST ...** *"Teacher, what is the greatest commandment?" Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matt 22:36-40)*

ILLUS: A man said to me, "They won't remember what you say, they will remember who you are."

4. **SETTLE DOWN FOR THE LONG HAUL ...** *As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one Body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." (Eph 4:1-6)*

UNDERLINE "bearing with one another in love"

ILLUS: In a couple of months, my wife and I will celebrate our 36th anniversary. Much of the joy we know now is simply because we have persevered together, and learned the things you can only learn over time ...

GOSPEL INVITATION:

We must be one for each other ...